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The COMPASS

AMERICAN · ASSOCIATION · OF · SOCIAL · WORKERS
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Chapters Urged to Act On State Poor Laws

The immediate appointment of chapter committees on revision of state poor laws was urged by Edith Abbott, Chairman of the Association's Committee on Revision of State Poor Laws, in her report at the Annual Meeting in Kansas City. The Committee believes that considerable progress in revising state legislation might be made during the coming year since it is the regular legislative year in most states. Special study and action by chapters in each state are required because state poor laws vary considerably. As Miss Abbott puts it, "there is not just one problem but 48 in considering poor law revision," so that the Committee has found it impossible to draft a model law that will be applicable to each state.

The Committee recommends that each chapter appoint a special committee this summer to study the poor laws in its state and to prepare a proposed revision for discussion by the chapter at an early fall meeting. Where there are several chapters in one state a joint committee could be appointed. The chapters would then be prepared to go into action in support of modernized poor relief legislation adapted to the needs of their particular states as soon as the legislatures convene.

Public Welfare Association Favors Federal Welfare Department

The American Public Welfare Association at its meeting in Kansas City went on record as favoring the development of comprehensive plans for the establishment on a permanent basis of a unit of the federal government concerned with the coordination and administration of all public welfare activities of the federal government. The Association also recommended the establishment of state departments of public welfare where they do not exist, and the strengthening of existing state departments. Its stand on qualified personnel was reaffirmed in the statement "that public welfare service is a technical function of government and should be administered in accordance with approved standards and methods by competent, qualified personnel, selected for public welfare positions entirely upon a merit basis."

Other resolutions adopted by the Association urge early coordination of permanent welfare and emergency relief functions, support of sound programs of social insurance by federal, state and local authorities engaged in public welfare service, revision of the poor relief laws, continuation and development of the federal transient program, participation by members of the Public Welfare Association and social workers generally in the formulation and development of a national housing program.

Grace Abbott Resigns to Teach

Though the resignation of Grace Abbott as Chief of the Children's Bureau on July 1 is greatly regretted by social workers, nevertheless they are delighted to know that her great ability and long experience in the field of public welfare are to be devoted to the training of future social workers. As Professor of Public Welfare in the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, she will have a wealth of knowledge to give to students interested in the developing field of public welfare from her thirteen years of successful and constructive administration of the Children's Bureau. Miss Abbott has also been appointed editor-in-chief of the Social Service Review, published by the University of Chicago, in which capacity her knowledge and experience will be of great value in carrying forward a professional journal whose importance in the social work field is already well established.

Miss Abbott's successor in the Children's Bureau has not yet been appointed. The Executive Committee of the AASW has sent a letter to Secretary Perkins, expressing its confidence in Miss Katherine Lenroot as a qualified successor to Miss Abbott. In the letter the Executive Committee expresses its conviction that the Children's Bureau is an important factor in the development of social protections and a valuable instrument for stimulating nation-wide social welfare activities, and that this conviction warrants an expression of interest in the appointment of the new chief.

Transient Program Endorsed

Continuation of the program for transients under federal control and with adequate federal funds was urged in a resolution prepared by the Committee on Care of the Transient and Homeless and passed at a meeting of the National Conference in Kansas City. In support of its resolution the Committee referred to the constructive service for transient persons and families which has been built up with a relatively small appropriation, and the extent to which traditional local prejudice is giving way to appreciation and cooperation with the transient program, as contrasted with the previous treatment of the non-resident person by the local community, and the social cost of the dependency, degeneracy and crime resulting from this treatment.

By-Law Amendments Adopted

The proposed changes in the By-Laws of the Association which were published in the April, 1934 *Compass*, were adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Association in Kansas City. Although the By-Laws had been amended from time to time they had never been radically revised to meet the Association's present structure and needs. Important changes which were made provide for more participation in the affairs of the Association by the membership as a whole, through the election of officers by mail, and a vote of the membership on matters of policy either by mail or at a meeting of officially appointed delegates. The delegate meeting will supersede both the National Council, which has been eliminated, and the Annual Meeting of members, neither of which proved to be a satisfactory representative body after the Association's growth curve began to go rapidly upward. Only a small proportion of the present membership could attend the Association's Annual Meeting at the time of the National Conference, and on the other hand, the 500 to 1,000 members who were able to attend, constituted an unwieldy body for taking action on important matters of policy in a meeting limited to two hours.

Under the amended By-Laws a delegate meeting may be called at any time by the National Executive Committee. Its composition will be similar to that of the former National Council with each chapter entitled to one delegate and an additional delegate for each 100 members or part thereof beyond the first one hundred members. Members in non-chapter areas are entitled to one delegate for every 50 members, to be elected by a vote of the membership when the officers of the Association are elected. However, the delegate meeting has powers which the old Council did not have since it is given a vote which is binding on the Association management. This right to control policies was formerly vested only in the Annual Meeting.

The value of a meeting composed of officially appointed chapter delegates and lasting for several days was amply demonstrated at the Washington Conference on Governmental Objectives. The large issues now before the Association and social work generally require close study and discussion by a group representing the membership as a whole and the experience with the Washington Conference seemed to point the way. Plans are under way for a delegate meeting next winter and a Committee will be appointed shortly to develop a program for the meeting.

Low Cost Housing and the National Housing Act

IN the last hours of the last sessions of the 73rd Congress, the Administration housing bill came through its long ordeal of lobbying and counter-lobbying in nearly its original form. Last minute pressure from the President is all that saved it from being laid over until next winter for action. It became effective law when the President signed it on June 28, and now we are at the beginning of an experiment to determine how much housing will result from this act.

The provisions of the act relating to home renovation and new home building are, very briefly, as follows:

1. Home renovation work is to be stimulated by insuring loans made for this purpose by various financial institutions. *Individual loans are limited to* $2,000.
2. Modern home building is to be encouraged by insuring mortgages on new houses or on existing houses. The interest rate on the mortgages will be from 5 to 6 per cent. The insurance premium will be from one-half to one per cent.
3. Mortgage insurance may be extended to low-cost housing projects involving not more than $10,000,000 each.

From this it seems obvious that the great masses of wage earners who are renters and not owners of real estate will not be benefited by the new housing act. The only mention of low-cost housing is in the provision which extends the insurance of mortgages to low-cost housing projects involving not more than $10,000,000 each. But since the law provides that interest rates on mortgages is to be from 5 to 6 per cent and that the levy for insurance on mortgages is to be around 1 per cent, and as low-cost housing depends on low interest rate, it is apparent that no low cost housing is possible. Many people are led to believe that by the enactment of this law bad housing will be eliminated. In reality the law provides nothing for the elimination of sub-standard housing. For instance, the provision limiting the in-

dividual loans for repair to $2,000 eliminates the possibility of reconditioning buildings in large metropolitan areas as real repair and renovating in a multiple dwelling costs considerably more.

The Labor Conference, the Housing Study Guild and the Federation of Architects, Engineers and Technicians, in a recently issued joint bulletin, point out that the act has no reference to low-cost housing and "is purely and simply an attempt to salvage the real estate business on its own obsolete and discredited terms. . . . Any such effort is merely to throw good money after bad money, down a bottomless well."

Social workers and other groups who are interested in providing the average wage earner with decent living accommodations must renew their fight for better housing.

ABRAHAM GOLDFELD.

Personnel Standards Division Charts Its Course

Progress in organizing the program of the Division on Personnel Standards was reported by the Chairman, Arthur Dunham, at the Association's Annual Meeting in Kansas City. The assignment of the Division, its immediate plans and personnel, were outlined in the April 1934 *Compass*. Since then, the Committee on Civil Service has been appointed under the chairmanship of A. Wayne McMillen. Mr. McMillen's report, presented at the Annual Meeting, is printed elsewhere in this issue of *The Compass*.

The two other committees which the Division decided to set up at its first meeting are in the process of being organized. Mary Irene Atkinson has accepted the chairmanship of the Committee on Registration and Certification, and the Division expects to announce very shortly the appointment of the chairman of the Committee on Relationship of the AASW to the "Non-eligible" Group.

Two matters of general policy have been agreed upon by the Division in considering its assignment:

(1) That social work positions should have common professional standards regardless of public or private auspices.

(2) That we adhere to eligibility for or membership in AASW as a basic requirement for all workers performing social work functions in welfare agencies, but that we request the Committee on Personnel Practices, if and when it is created, to give special attention to the problem of promoting liberal opportunities for emergency relief workers who have the required educational background to acquire professional social work training of a type that will render them eligible for membership in the AASW.

* * *

Under these two sign posts, the Division is charting the position the Association may be ready to take on professional issues that emerge from material coming in to the national office in the form of chapter communications and general correspondence.

A number of instances of this material cited in Mr. Davies' presidential address on page 8 of this issue of *The Compass* show the different ways and means by which these problems are being approached in different parts of the country, both with and without respect to the standards specified in the Association's present membership requirements. Since that address was written, further local chapter and non-chapter activities have come to light, and the FERA has outlined a plan for the subsidization of a selected group drawn from the relief administration programs throughout the country in order to permit professional training in cooperation with existing schools of social work.

REGISTRATION AND CERTIFICATION

It is apparent to the Division that varying methods for registration and certification are developing rapidly enough to mean that a uniform certification bill and uniform examinations may have to be considered in the near future in order to pave the way for state standards that are similar enough to make reciprocity possible.

CIVIL SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Obvious too, is the fact that lack of standardization in requirements for social work positions under civil service makes it difficult for civil service commissioners to know what constitutes good standards.

REQUIREMENTS AND "NON-ELIGIBLES"

The conflict between the Association's present rigid requirements and the very large "drafted" group in social work who wish to acquire membership status, is one of the most important problems before the Association.

CURRENT ISSUES

These are matters of important current development in which it is evident to the Division on Personnel Standards that the professional group must acquire competent knowledge of civil service procedures, of experiments in the use of examinations for qualifying social work personnel in both public and private agencies and of the experience of other professional fields in their development toward state recognition, if social workers are to have an effective degree of control in the establishment of standards and a vital influence on the future of their own profession.

Alfred Winters Joins National Staff

Alfred G. Winters joined the national staff on July 1 as an assistant executive secretary with special responsibility for the Association's program in the field of employment practices. As the President of the Association pointed out in

his annual address on page 9 of this issue of *The Compass*, the subject of employment practices has been recognized as one of the Association's three major fields of interest and the Executive Committee at its meeting last spring authorized the organization of a Division on Employment Practices with an appropriation for a limited time which would permit special staff assistance for the Division.

As a result of this action, the services of Mr. Winters were secured and definite plans for the activities of the Division are now going forward.

Mr. Winters, who has recently been with the Cleveland Associated Charities and the Cuyahoga County Relief Administration, comes to the Association with excellent professional preparation and a very real interest in the subject of employment practices. He finished the two year post-graduate course at Western Reserve University School of Applied Social Sciences in 1931 and the following year secured a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship for an additional year of study at Western Reserve University in psychiatric social work. He then took a position supervising men students of the School of Applied Social Sciences for the Doan Branch of the Cleveland Associated Charities and later became a district secretary of the Cleveland Associated Charities. He was on the staff of the Cuyahoga County Relief Administration as district secretary when he accepted the position on the Association's staff.

Personnel in Public Hospitals

WITH public social work very much in the foreground, the American Association of Hospital Social Workers decided some time ago that it was important to know something of the educational and experience requirements for social workers in governmental hospitals. A group of 208 hospitals, including certain federal and city systems, was selected for study, on the basis of the 1932 report of hospitals of the American Medical Association and an analysis of the findings based on 1932 data was completed in 1933 by Helen Beckley, Executive Secretary of the American Association of Hospital Social Workers.

Of the 208 hospitals and systems selected for study, 129 cooperated by supplying the necessary information. These replies came from 30 different states and are probably quite representative, since they include different types of communities and institutions. Twenty-five of the 129 hospitals reported that they had no social service department. The remaining 104 hospitals and systems, which do not include the federal hospitals, are distributed over 30 states. In this geographical analysis, two or more hospitals in a city system were counted as one. The hospitals in the various federal systems represented in the study (U. S. Public Health Service, U. S. Veterans Bureau, Department of the Interior, and Army and Navy Hospitals) numbered 50.

The total number of separate hospitals represented in the study is 203, employing approximately 600 social workers.

Requirements for Positions Under Civil Service

The federal hospitals, excluding the Army and Navy Hospitals whose departments of social work are a part of the Red Cross service, and 37 hospitals not in the federal system, require workers to qualify through civil service examinations. The educational and experience requirements for social work positions in federal hospitals, according to the last examination given by the U. S. Civil Service Commission at the time this study was made, permitted three alternatives: (1) graduation from college with courses in sociology or psychology, plus a year of psychiatric social case work; (2) three years of college work, plus 2 years of social case work, one year of which must have been psychiatric; (3) graduation from a one year course in an approved school of social work, plus one year of psychiatric social work. Among the 37 other hospitals, there were 10 which required graduation from a school of social work, 7 which required graduation from college, 1 which required either of these, 2 which required R.N. degrees, 10 which required graduation from high school, and 7 which either had no requirements or did not state them. In the last group preference is given in several instances to college graduates or to candidates who have completed one year in a school of social work.

That the standards set up by civil service commissions have been influenced by social workers in several important groups of hospitals, Miss Beckley felt was clearly revealed in the material studied. The federal hospitals, Alameda and Los Angeles County hospitals and health centers, Grasslands Hospital (Westchester County, New York) and the city hospitals in Minneapolis, Cleveland and Newark, N. J., seemed to show this influence most definitely.

Requirements for Non-Civil Service Positions

The requirements for positions not under civil service ranged from nothing at all to an M.A. from a school of social work. Slightly less than half of the 69 hospitals or hospital systems in this group (29) required school of social work education, although graduation was not always specified. Fifteen of the 29 required graduation from college as well as school of social work education. College graduation was required by 18 departments or systems, 6 required graduation from a nursing school, 7 required high school graduation and 6 had no policy. The hospitals in this group with the highest educational standards were found to be those administered by state universities. Some city hospitals not on civil service reported high educational requirements and several state

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hospitals for mental disease required school of social work training and professional social work experience. The New York City hospitals give preference to persons who have had education in social work and who have the R.N. degree, which, interpreted as a minimum professional qualification, is required as a substitute for civil service.

In 203 different institutions studied it was found that 142 or 70% required either an A.B. degree or professional training in social work. Thirty-two or 15% require the degree of R.N. with preference given in the majority of these hospitals to those who have had in addition some educational preparation in professional social work.

ORGANIZATION POLICIES

Where positions are not under civil service the hospital administrator appoints the director of the social service department in the large majority of cases and the director appoints the staff with the approval of the administrator. Similarly in the majority of cases the social service department is directly responsible to the hospital administrator and most departments are financed as a part of the general budget of the hospital, though 17 were financed by departments of public welfare and 2 by community chests.

SUMMARY

In summarizing the findings, Miss Beckley points out that information is lacking on the extent to which the present personnel in the governmental hospitals meet the defined requirements for social service personnel. However, the fact that a college degree or school of social work preparation is required in more than two-thirds of these hospitals and preferred in many others, indicates, in her opinion, that personnel standards in public hospitals are being raised as the number of professionally prepared social workers increases and that professional social workers can have considerable influence in further developing this trend.

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HOUSING NEWS

Housing received due attention at the National Conference of Social Work in Kansas City at a meeting held under the auspices of the National Public Housing Conference. The housing problem was reviewed by Miss Helen Alfred and Mr. Bohn. Mr. Tufts spoke on the question of demolition and Mr. Goldfeld on the social aspects of management. About 100 persons were present.

The Housing Committee of the A.A.S.W. arranged its own meeting with Father O'Grady and Mr. Goldfeld leading a discussion on "The Job of the Social Worker in the Housing Field." About forty people were present. Questions raised dealt with the problem of paying rent for the unemployed, homesteads, how to arouse interest in housing in a local community and similar topics.

Both meetings indicated the need for more discussions of this kind.

* * *

As a result of a conference on "Rehousing of Families Displaced by New Housing Construction" held in Washington on June 8th, 1934, a set of very important resolutions and recommendations were submitted to Secretary Harold L. Ickes and Harry L. Hopkins in connection with the matter. Gerald D. Hunter, Dr. Hertha Kraus and Stockton Raymond, social workers, served on the Committee. The resolutions are obtainable at the National Association of Housing Officials, 850 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois.

* * *

"Housing in Pittsburg," the report of the Pittsburg Housing Association for the three years, 1931-32-33, is a pamphlet which crowds into its 32 pages an astonishing amount of factual information and stimulating suggestions. It consists of a panoramic survey of bad housing conditions in Pittsburg and an account of what the Association has done about them. Since most of the steps taken by the Association have been effective in improving specific conditions, the report should be enormously valuable to Housing Committees or other groups in suggesting ways to act. Obtainable at 524 Pennsylvania Avenue, Pittsburg, Pa.

* * *

The Committee on Housing of the Washington Council of Social Agencies (902 Barr Building, Washington, D. C.) has issued a seven page mimeographed "catechism" on housing called, "Some Housing Questions and the Answers" which forms an excellent base for the kind of propaganda for low-cost housing which social workers ought to be carrying on.

* * *

Loula D. Lasker's article entitled, "Uncle Sam—Landlord" in the *Survey Graphic* for March will bear re-reading now in light of the most recent federal housing legislation. It is still true that a hundred three-room cottages built with a government loan of $45,000 in the Virgin Islands are the principle accomplishment of the loudly advertised federal housing program.

* * *

The housing survey of the City of Dayton, Ohio, prepared by the City Plan Board with CWA funds, is conscientiously restrained in tone. In spite of this, the indisputable fact is that in Dayton as in every other city where similar surveys have been made the cost of the slums to the community are greater than they are worth to anybody. The "comprehensive housing program" included as a long appendix to the survey is worth detailed study.

STANDARDS FOR CIVIL SERVICE

Report of Committee on Civil Service, Division on Personnel Standards*

A. WAYNE MCMILLEN, *Chairman*

AT the first meeting of the new Division on Personnel Standards in February, it was decided to appoint a special committee on Civil Service. The writer accepted the responsibility of serving as chairman of this Committee and at his request the following members of the Division have agreed to share responsibility as members of this Committee: Robert Lansdale of Washington; Rose McHugh of Albany; Joseph L. Moss of Chicago; Kenneth L. M. Pray of Philadelphia.

In outlining the duties of this Committee the Division took formal action indicating that it wants its activities with respect to Civil Service to be definitely promotional rather than merely fact finding in character. The Division decided, however, it was first necessary to reach agreement concerning the program it will promote. The Civil Service Committee was, therefore, asked to study the present personnel practices carefully, including not only civil service systems but also voluntary systems which have succeeded in establishing and maintaining high standards in the field of personnel administration.

At the meeting of the Division in Washington, it was clear that the members were already in agreement with respect to a few fundamental points. Chief of these was the unanimous conviction that personnel constitutes the central problem of community organization. Regardless of statutes and ordinances, regardless of the good intentions of state and federal officials, services to the distressed segments of the community can not be raised very far above the level of the persons who actually administer them. Consequently there is no subject of greater concern to social workers.

While this area of thought is well clarified, the whole question of how to obtain the objective remains very largely unclarified. Much knowledge, information, evaluation and synthesis must intervene before an even approximate agreement can be expected. It is to this task that the Civil Service Committee has been asked to address itself.

Immediately after its appointment the Committee on Civil Service took stock to determine how it could best fulfill its assignment. In view of the interest and responsibility of the American Public Welfare Association with respect to the problem of personnel, an approach was made to this organization in an effort to enlist assistance. The Director, Frank Bane, was immediately interested in participating and an arrangement was effected which seemed exceedingly promising. Under this arrangement Mr. Bane made available the services of Robert Lansdale, then a member of his staff, and Mr. Lansdale immediately set to work to assemble information. Unfortunately for the work of this Committee, Mr. Lansdale, within a couple of weeks after starting this work, was obliged to drop it owing to his transfer from the staff of the American Public Welfare Association to the staff of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

During the brief period Mr. Lansdale was engaged in the work for the Civil Service Committee he made remarkable strides. He sent out requests for information to a large number of administrative units, some of which have civil service provisions and others of which operate under voluntary arrangements. These inquiries have elicited a bulky file of replies which now need to be studied and evaluated by an experienced social worker.

The activities of the Civil Service Committee in the past two months have consisted chiefly in trying to effect an arrangement for continuing and carrying to conclusion the work thus begun by Mr. Lansdale. Although no less than four plans have been formulated, none has yet been brought to a successful consummation. There is now reason to fear that further work of this committee will of necessity be postponed until autumn. It is the hope of the committee that during the summer one of several plans now under consideration can be worked out whereby an experienced person will undertake the task of gathering additional material, evaluating it, and arriving at some concrete proposals to submit to the Division. The inquires, sent out by Mr. Lansdale, relate to state and county units. The extensive field of municipal administration is thus as yet untouched even to the extent of requesting information. It has become clear that the assignment of this Committee is one which will involve considerable research. In view of that fact and in view of the present uncertainties as to ways and means of getting the work done, it would be unwise to predict when a more tangible report of progress will be available for the Association. For the valuable assistance already rendered, the Civil Service Committee is grateful to Frank Bane and Marietta Stevenson of the American Public Welfare Association.

* Given at the Association's Annual Meeting in Kansas City, May 24, 1934.

THE PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCE IN SOCIAL WORK*

STANLEY P. DAVIES

NOTHING in this world calls for more consummate skill than the task which social work has taken upon itself—that of helping people with their problems and toward a fuller enjoyment of life. The longer one is in social work, the more one is brought to the realization that it is a most difficult thing for one person to know how to be really helpful to another person in meeting the situations with which life confronts him. This matter of knowing how to be really helpful is the essence of all social work, whether it be casework, group work, community organization, public health, or social legislation.

Yet as compared with related fields of human service, social work has lagged far behind in safeguarding those among whom it practises from the bungling of the unskilled and the ineptitudes of those unlearned in the art of helping people.

It is this need of developing a sufficiently large body of social workers in this country, who are equipped both by aptitude and training for this peculiarly difficult form of human service that is the motivating force of the professional movement which has taken form in the American Association of Social Workers. This is the Association's primary task. Amidst all the other interests which have been developing within the Association, it must remain primary.

No one thing, I am persuaded, will so largely determine the future usefulness of social work, the degree of its contribution to human well-being as the Association's success with that primary task. We wish to develop social work as a profession, not for the eclat of professional status but for the assurance that professional equipment gives of a quality of human service that will enable this undertaking for social welfare more and more to fulfill its promise.

The Association's own standards of membership eligibility are not a device for setting up an exclusive and select inner-fraternity of social workers. They are rather established to serve as a criterion of minimum desirable professional qualification for all social workers. Nor is the Association's concern with personnel problems limited to those who may be recruited each year for its own membership. Its real concern is with the equipment and training of all personnel engaged in the whole field of social work. In seeking to bring the practitioners of social work up to a professional level, the Association is squarely facing the seemingly overwhelming problem of the thousands of persons, without any semblance of social work training, who have been brought into the field because of emergency needs.

A large proportion of these emergency workers have been on the job now for as long as three or four years. They have been conducting routine investigations and dispensing relief. They have acquired little real social work experience. Their training, with a few exceptions, has been limited to random social work courses. The question of the future of these people in the social work field and the larger question of the future of social work itself, under these circumstances, must now be faced. The giving of relief is a hazardous process as every seasoned social worker knows. To give it in ways that will not destroy but will, as far as possible, help to preserve and promote the values of family life and the best functioning of the individual, is an art calling for knowledge and skill just as much as any other form of casework service. Disastrous as it is that so many millions of people have been forced to accept relief for so long a period, it would be even more disastrous if for an indefinite period to come, the relief of a significant proportion of the American population, most of whom had been completely self-supporting before the depression, were to be left in the hands of those who have acquired little or no social work knowledge or skill. Moreover, when families must subsist for a long time on relief, their economic need frequently becomes complicated by other personal and family problems with which the staff of the relief agency should be equipped to deal.

Our Temporary Emergency Relief Administrations are beginning to drop the T and are becoming ERA's. Before long they will drop the E, too, and become merely RA's. By that time, which is certainly not far distant, they will doubtless have become part and parcel of the constituted public welfare machinery of our states and localities. Right now in this critical period of transition from temporary to permanent is the strategic time for this Association to bring all its force to bear on securing the recognition and establishment of personnel standards. Let us hope that public outdoor relief with all its pauper stigma, its niggardliness, and its harsh vindictiveness, administered as it was so largely by the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, has gone into the limbo along with many other things of pre-depression days.

We can take great encouragement from the fact that by and large throughout the country, despite all the pressures of an overwhelming emergency load, emergency relief administrations have marked a great and significant advance over the old public outdoor relief. They at least have been based on certain fundamental social work principles which were completely foreign to the

* Address by the President at the Association's Annual Meeting in Kansas City, May 24, 1934.

usual poor relief department. With all of the new professional problems which have arisen out of the emergency, some definite and hopeful beginnings in the right direction have been made during the stress of these years. In the FERA and in most of the states, well-qualified social workers have been placed in key positions in the administration of public emergency relief, and they in turn have succeeded in securing a limited number of trained persons as their associates. There is, then, in many places, a nucleus from which, with our aid and support, personnel standards may be expected to grow.

A number of the young people, many of them recent college graduates, who have joined the staffs of public relief administrations as emergency workers, have the personality and the educational background which qualify them for admission to professional training and which make them promising candidates for social work. This Association might well interest itself in encouraging the development of plans which might make it possible for these eligible persons to become fully prepared for social work as a career.

We now find state and local relief administrations all over the country in the process of rebuilding their staffs for the long pull ahead. The directors of many of these public agencies, frequently themselves members of the AASW, are in the midst of a vigorous effort to bring their agencies up to acceptable social work standards.

There seems to be a marked movement among the public emergency relief administrations to classify positions and to set up minimum standards of qualification for each grade. Accumulating evidence is coming into the national office of the Association from widely scattered states that the AASW standards of eligibility furnish both the basis and the inspiration for these standards. In fact, it seems clear that the AASW standards furnish the one concrete and authoritative guide to professional qualification and that except for them we would be steering a course without chart or compass. The Association, having had the courage to establish objective standards of qualification based on educational background, professional technical training and experience, is now by that very fact rendering an indispensable service to the progress of social work and is placed in a most strategic position to aid social work by improving the equipment of its practitioners.

For example, as noted in the last number of *The Compass*, the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration of New York State, in an official bulletin issued on February 15, 1934, sets up minimum requirements of education and experience for each grade of position in the local public welfare administrations under its supervision. These requirements, while not identical with AASW standards, are very plainly patterned after them.

In the growing movement toward the registration of social workers and the establishment of a system of certification of persons for public social work positions, the same thing holds true. In the State of Ohio, for example, at the request of the State Relief Administration, all social workers and aides in public relief agencies administering state and federal funds are being certified by the Division of Charities of the State Department of Public Welfare. Classifications have been set up based on specific qualifications which require college graduation and school of social work training without equivalents for all social work positions, except those of junior case worker and aide or investigator. Assistance in checking qualifications has been given by several members of the AASW serving as an Advisory Committee to the Division of Charities for this purpose. Again AASW membership standards have set the example.

Likewise, civil service commissions in several of the states have expressed their satisfaction in learning that social workers through this Association had at last established concrete standards of qualification in this field, and welcome the opportunity of utilizing such standards in civil service requirements for social work positions.

Even though the requirements set up by public welfare administrations, by state certifying authorities, or by civil service commissions, do not fully attain the level of membership eligibility for the AASW, the point is that they are reaching out toward them. With the encouragement and support of this Association the approach to AASW standards may be expected to be a progressively nearer one as the years go on and more and more persons find it advantageous to secure full professional training. As a result of that progressive development, I think we can look forward to the day when AASW standards and the minimum personnel standards of agencies, public and private, will be identical. When that occurs, we shall have achieved our first major professional objective and shall have reached a significant milestone in the developing usefulness of social work as a humanitarian undertaking.

It is, therefore, most appropriate that at this time when the activities of the Association are being grouped into three main divisions, as announced in the last number of *The Compass*, one of these first major divisions to be organized should be that on Personnel Standards. That Division, which held its organization meeting in Washington following the Conference on Governmental Objectives, is already actively at work.

The second closely related division, for whose

work an appropriation has been made by the Association and which is about to be set up, is the Division on Employment Practices. This division is also directly related to the all-important question of personnel. Its assignment is to develop the program of the AASW on all matters relating to the terms and conditions under which social workers are employed as a means of strengthening the efforts of the Association to secure and retain highly qualified professional personnel in social work. Some of the activities which this Division might undertake as suggested by the Executive Secretary, are:

1. The formulation of a statement, bearing the Association's approval, on methods for ending the present immobility in salary schedules for new professional workers.
2. Formulation of statements regarding need for promotion in non-administrative and non-executive positions.
3. Gathering available data from chapters, community chests, public departments, and other sources regarding positions and salaries. If it seems desirable after consideration the Committee could disseminate information about such policies to stimulate proper consideration of the problem of salaries in relation to standards of personnel.
4. Certain broad classifications of workers with corresponding salary minima might be attempted.
5. Development of a plan for presentation to a foundation or other source of support looking to the development of a properly equipped fact finding agency or department devoted to data about personnel in social work. With a number of experiments in the background it should be increasingly possible to interest someone in a comprehensive and periodic collection of data on social work salaries. If we could carry our conviction that the personnel problem is the key to satisfactory development of the new public welfare programs it would seem possible that some foundation might be interested. The proposed data might be expanded to include also such factors as the employment of social workers and the qualification of those employed, the classification of the position filled, turnover, etc.
6. Completion of work on the annuity study.
7. Further consideration of the grievance procedure.

That two of the three major working divisions of the Association should be so intimately concerned with professional standards and the promotion and protection of professional interests, is to me the surest proof that the Association is continuing to carry out more and more effectively its basic purposes.

The remaining major division of the Association's present activities, and it is certainly a going division, is that on Government and Social Work. This Division had won its spurs long before it took on its new divisional status, for it is the outgrowth without the slightest interruption in its great industry and activity of the former Committee on Federal Action. This Committee is at present under the general supervision of a hard-working Steering Committee and has active Committees on Current Relief Statistics, Revision of State Poor Laws, Coordination of Governmental Services, and Housing. This Committee will also make its own report at this meeting.

Beyond its more objective accomplishments, there is a subjective value growing out of the American Association of Social Workers which strikes deep in its significance for the future of social work. This is the sense of professional solidarity and of professional obligation. Although we are no less loyal to our agencies and to our fields, the Association develops in us a larger loyalty to social work as a whole. We become something more than group workers, case workers, and visiting teachers; something more than executives and practitioners. We become social workers first of all, sharing common ideals and aspirations. We no longer are mere employees—hirelings. We are a profession. We have a real sense of solidarity and from this sense of professional solidarity we are strongly motivated to exemplify and to uphold standards of ethics and of performance—to put the interests of those whom we serve before self-interest, and to work together for the realization of the best objectives of social work.

What greater assurance for the integrity, sincerity and effectiveness of social work can there be than this combined sense of professional solidarity and professional obligation? It is the answer, it seems to me, to those persons who, regarding mediocrity, inefficiency and political interference as an inevitable evil in any form of public service, hold grave fears for the future of social work under public auspices. I have faith that the professionally conscious social worker will be equally a social worker, true to the finest traditions of his calling, whether working under public or private auspices, just as a physician is no less a physician whether he be in private practice or on a public payroll.

Every addition to the professional ranks of those engaged in our field will give that much more assurance of the realization of social work aims. This is the reason, it seems to me, why we cannot put too much stress upon the development of personnel standards in both public and private social work to the point where social work practitioners and executives from top to bottom will be enabled to identify themselves with the professional group as members of this Association.

Personnel Standards, Employment Practices, Government and Social Work—is not it clear that in these three divisional groupings of closely inter-related activities and interests we have a broad front on which to march forward as an Association toward our central objective, which is simply that of implementing social work for its best achievement?

OUR ILLUSIONS REGARDING GOVERNMENT

Excerpts from an address by MARY VAN KLEECK at the National Conference of Social Work in Kansas City, published in full in *The Mid Monthly Survey*, June, 1934.

Miss van Kleeck's address produced more heat, and for many social workers more light, than any other at the Conference. Members of the Association will want to read the complete text in THE SURVEY *but excerpts which relate to the Association's program are reprinted here so that members may give special consideration to Miss van Kleeck's argument that welfare services of the kind advocated by the Association at its Conference on Governmental Objectives cannot be secured through the instrumentality of government in our present economic system and that social workers should ally themselves with workers in industry in support of a new economic order if they are genuinely concerned to establish security and raise standards of living.*

THE past five years have brought social workers face to face with two major issues—the economic system and the political system. The need for relief on a mounting scale has been the symptom of the crisis in industry and agriculture, which have been unable to maintain employment and have steadily cut the earnings of those who still remain employed. To the political system, social workers have turned as the source of funds needed for the relief which private social agencies can no longer provide. In the recent Conference on Governmental Objectives for Social Work under the auspices of the American Association of Social Workers, the declaration was made in the recommendations that "government is the only effective instrument for the social use of our national wealth." With this as a cornerstone, the Conference then committed itself to this program:

> We believe that this is the time for the creation of a permanent, comprehensive, well coordinated and adequate system of welfare services, so conceived as to assure ourselves, as a people, against the common hazards of our economic and social life, such as are inherent in unemployment, old age, widowhood, sickness or other factors which interfere with the normal processes of self-maintenance.

Social workers thus stand committed to a program involving a definite concept of confidence in government as a social agency able to function effectively for such a program in the present economic system. Moreover, such a commitment is not even qualified as one of "principle." The present administration of welfare services by the federal government was endorsed by the Conference in these words:

> The Conference in addressing itself to the problems of governmental objectives for social work wishes to pay tribute to Congress and to the federal administration for recognizing its obligation to meet the needs of people in this emergency on a national basis, for thus developing for the first time a national system of aid to families and individuals, for special recognition of federal responsibility for service to transients and for bringing unemployment relief up to a more nearly adequate level.

Not only is this high tribute paid to Congress and to the present administration, but social work identifies itself completely with the methods followed, in these words:

> In carrying out this program, we believe the best traditions and experience of social work have been utilized.

Not wishing to limit its praise to the relief program, the Conference included the whole economic and relief set-up of the present emergency, declaring:

> The Conference more especially pays tribute to the courageous and ingenious social thinking represented by such programs as the NRA, the NRS, FERA, the CCC and the CWA.

Thus through this Conference the professional association of social workers has committed itself to identification with the present administration, to endorsement of what it supposes its principles to be, and to hope for an adequate program of social work under government auspices. This Division of Professional Standards and Education, particularly in a session jointly arranged with the American Association of Social Workers, is the proper occasion to examine the validity of this position. It is a departure from the past in which the dominant type of American social work, particularly in those phases concerned with relief, has tended to be private and voluntary rather than governmental. This in itself makes desirable an examination of the fundamentals of this shift. But the really important question is not whether social work is changing its base from private to governmental sources, but whether this reliance upon government commits social workers to the preservation of the status quo and separates them from their clients, leading them into the position of defense of the politicians in their effort to protect political institutions against the strain put upon them by the failures of industry to maintain employment, and by the industrial policy which seeks to sustain profits at the expense of standards of living. . . . .

May I suggest at the outset two theories of government, and then examine them in the light of the relief program, judged in its economic aspects rather than from the point of view of the technique of social work?

The theory which has largely dominated the political programs of social work is that government stands above conflicting interests and in a democracy can be brought, by majority vote, to

decide between those conflicts and compel standards and policies which are in the public interest. The program advanced by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in Great Britain, based upon the idea of a national minimum in the industrial field, is derived from the principle that a law can be passed and administered which will more or less equalize the inequalities in the present distribution of wealth and establish a basis below which wages and other conditions of employment affecting the standards of living of the working class are not allowed to fall. . . . .

Another theory of government is tenable and should at least be considered in the light of American experience; for if it is true, it raises danger signals of momentous importance in the decisions of social workers and their program for the United States today. This theory is that government essentially is dominated by the strongest economic power and becomes the instrument to serve the purposes of the groups possessing that power. To put this in terms familiar in American discussions, government tends to protect property rights rather than human rights. A legislative proposal which lays burdens upon property—such as workmen's compensation, reduction of hours of work, minimum wage, or unemployment insurance—is resisted at every point in the effort to enact it into law. . . . .

The basic conflict of interest between labor and capital is too clear to need proof here. The strikes of the past year demonstrate it as an immediate, contemporary problem. Our illusions regarding government arise out of a refusal to recognize these conflicts. They assume that the government is above the struggle and that if social workers can win the government to their program they will have done their part in establishing that elusive thing called social justice. The test of whether these are illusions is now being made before our eyes, and the unfolding of the relief program is the illustration to be used here. . . . .

The relief program is the thermometer representing the political leadership's diagnosis of the effectiveness of the demands of those who need relief. Social workers happen to belong to the profession which is charged with the task of administering relief. Social workers therefore are drawn into the maneuvers to maintain status and power in the three-cornered conflict of interest between those who own and control the economic system; the workers, who are claiming their right to a livelihood in an age of plentiful production; and the government, which has always most closely identified itself with property rights.

I am not unmindful that the American Association of Social Workers in 1931, moved from its professional isolation, busy with the maintenance of professional standards, educational requirements and the like, took up the problems of relief, appointed a Commission on Unemployment and took an active part in organizing the Senate hearings on unemployment relief in December of that year. Those hearings are in themselves evidence that social workers were ready to fulfil the function of informing the community of the needs of their clients. But if one accepts the fact that we may have illusions regarding government, one may say with some cynicism that the social workers were helping the politicians to see just how far it was necessary to go in yielding to the demands of the needy in order to protect both the political and the economic status quo. . . . .

The President's statement of the new relief plan was made just eleven days after adjournment of the Washington conference where the social workers formulated their "governmental objectives." It is good to know that the recommendations of the conference had gone far beyond this relief program of the administration and had called for adequate cash relief and continuance of a "federal employment project" which should be based on "qualifications for employment and not on need," opposed the program already announced for demobilization and termination of the Civil Works Administration, and committed social workers to a campaign for attainment of the recommendations.

Nevertheless the high tribute paid to Congress and the administration just eleven days before this announcement by the President does not speak well for the social workers' ability to read the signs of the times in economic and political programs. It is my contention that failure to read these signs is due to illusions regarding government, and that these are especially marked in the social workers' acceptance of the economic program of the New Deal. If the social workers had withheld their tribute to the administration and to Congress, it is not impossible that they might have had more weight in their recommendations, and moreover they would have been more free for their campaign.

In other words, the experience would suggest that social workers need more decisive formulations of their purposes and more aggressive action toward their attainment, and for both of these a closer association with the workers' groups than with boards of directors and governmental officials would give that vitality to social purpose which comes out of the genuine experience of life of the underprivileged. These, to be sure, are the clients of social workers, but it is easy to become too professional in one's dealings with clients and to fail to achieve the sense of fellowship which social workers must attain if they are to take part in the struggle for human rights. The delusion that human rights are attainable without struggle,

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through the processes of government or through the simple administrative decision of a governmental official, is responsible for weak programs and ineffective activities, of which the whole history of social workers' organized relation to federal legislation for relief gives evidence. The culmination is in the most recent declaration of the President, in his message to Congress on May 15, calling for a wholly inadequate appropriation by Congress, with such lack of clarity in lumping together appropriations for public works and for relief as will inevitably lead once more to the danger of appropriating funds for battleships instead of cash relief for the unemployed. . . . .

While using these concrete illustrations of a more or less unconscious acceptance of government, I would prefer to discuss the subject in broader terms, for to me it is of tremendous importance that the whole body of social workers should be clearsighted in this present crucial period. A non-partisan attitude toward political programs at a time when the issue is drawn as sharply as it is today may turn into essential partisanship, namely, defense of the status quo, and the programs of a previous decade which were intended to effect change can now be turned into obstacles to change. When they are put forward and supported by social workers they may actually delude industrial workers and the general public in a false confidence that welfare services can be devised without change in the economic system.

This is not to say that no immediate steps are to be taken. It is highly important that social workers should regard themselves primarily as serving their clients and indeed sharing with them in the status of workers in American society. It is in the professional organization that we social workers may think ourselves clear of our entanglements with the separate agencies of social service; define our goals, examine the foundations and reach our own clear decisions as to whether capitalism, private ownership and profit-making are to be retained, or whether the resources of this country are to be utilized in a socialized, planned economy for the raising of standards of living and the establishment of security of livelihood of the people. . . . .

Social workers are accepting important positions in various branches of government in this country. Those of you who believe that that is the way you can best serve must look well to the significance of the mass protests which are disturbing your working hours. Will social workers continue to bear the brunt of these protests against politicians in their alliance with the property interests of the community, or will social workers rather look upon themselves as spokesmen for these protests, refusing to aid in putting up defenses for the status quo against the inevitable and necessary demands of those who suffer?

A clearer view will inevitably lead to some refusals to take governmental positions if these demand, as many do, that social workers in governmental positions will serve as apologists for the government of the day. Outspoken demands must come from the group as a whole, through a new professional alignment which should permeate the professional organization of social workers, the schools of training and the journals. . . . .

* * * *

As a specific illustration of what Miss van Kleeck calls an unconscious acceptance of government, she cites the reason for support of the Wagner Lewis Bill advanced by the Association's Committee on Coordination of Governmental Services in its report on this bill to the chapters. The Committee advocated support of the bill "as an interim measure on the basis that the present temper of the administration and Congress does not promise more comprehensive legislation." Miss van Kleeck believes that social workers should work out principles and find the way to secure the action necessary to enact them into law rather than endorse compromise measures which have a more immediate chance of enactment.